



**Speech by John Sauven, Executive Director of Greenpeace UK  
at the launch of the Conservative Party's Power For The People  
policy document**

**6 December 2007**

I'd like to start off by welcoming David Cameron, Peter Ainsworth (Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Oliver Leitwin (Chairman of Conservative Research Department), Greg Barker (Shadow Environment Minister) and Charles Hendry (Shadow Energy Minister) and everyone here to Greenpeace.

This is our solar-powered warehouse. This building is powered with clean energy, and over the course of a year generates as much electricity as it uses. It's where we design our direct action protests, so I can confidently say that politicians of all shades have over the years had reason to rue this place.

In fact it was in this very room that we worked out how to get onto John Prescott's roof and install solar panels on his castle in Hull because he'd done so little to enable other people to generate clean energy. After today's announcement I'm assuming we won't be doing a similar thing in Notting Hill. We might, of course, need to do other things...

We don't always see eye to eye with politicians, but I'm happy to say that today – on decentralised energy – we do.

And I think it's worth noting - especially in relation to decentralised energy - that this year marks a transition into a new era in which for the first time most people on this planet live in cities.

It marks a massive historical shift from the countryside to the town.

It also means that - today - cities are consuming around 3/4 of the world's energy and produce even more of its greenhouse gases.

Here we are – in London today - for example.

Our capital emits nearly 1/7th of the UK's emissions.

But it is also here in London that the blueprint for a solution has emerged most strongly. For some time, Greenpeace has been working with Mayor Livingstone to champion a clean, decentralised energy system for London that could slash the city's emissions by 60%.

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And now, here, today, David Cameron will unveil his own revolutionary proposals that could take this emerging vision of a smart decentralised energy system - promoting locally generated clean energy for homes, businesses and communities - across the whole country.

At Greenpeace we focus on solutions to the environmental threats that we expose. Our actions uncover what is wrong, but we bring with action a strong call and a clear vision of what is right. The challenge of climate change is the greatest threat of all and yet ironically the energy solutions essential to tackling it are simple and well understood.

The foundation of a low carbon economy rests on three pillars:

Firstly: we need to massively reduce energy consumption - by making our homes, gadgets and vehicles smarter, so that they use less energy to keep us warm, provide the light and services we need and allow us to travel. We all know the simple facts. Stand by buttons consume 8% of domestic electricity or that switching to energy efficient light bulbs is equivalent to shutting down one big power station.

Secondly: we must maximise the use of large scale renewable energy - ensuring that the riches of our windswept island - the power of the wind, earth, sun and sea - are harnessed

And crucially: we need to revolutionise the way we deliver our energy. This is what decentralised energy is all about.

The system we have today wastes a staggering two thirds of the energy produced by our power stations – mostly as heat going up the cooling towers.

Although climate change and energy security are big priorities for energy policy, enough heat is wasted by our power system to provide heat and hot water for all the buildings in the UK. In fact a fifth of all our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions come from this WASTED energy alone.

We need to replace it with a decentralised system that focuses on smarter, local energy generation which cuts out this shocking amount of waste. By using so-called combined heat and power generators we can reach levels of efficiency that would slash our carbon dioxide emissions at a stroke.

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These decentralised plants can be deployed on both a large and small scale including maximizing the use of local resources like biogas and biomass and in the short to medium term using fossil fuels as well like natural gas. If they're used in conjunction with renewable technologies we can meet our energy needs.

Of these three pillars of a low carbon economy, decentralised energy is particularly ideal for urban environments. The Energy Savings Trust predict that micro-generation alone, with suitable policy support, could deliver 8% of UK electricity by 2020.

There are many cities around the world, including London, now looking at decentralising energy - utilising a wide variety of renewable energy technologies and making the smartest use of fossil fuels.

The scale of the task - changing the architecture of our energy system and shifting to new renewable energy sources is daunting, but the barriers are more political than technological. And in other countries across the world there are solid, working examples proving that this can be done.

As the REPORT makes clear our centralised power system dates back to the 1930s. Little in that time has changed. Still more energy is wasted than used in our power stations.

And although the biggest source of CO2 emissions is fuel used for heat, the issue of heat got just 4 pages out of 342 pages in the recent Energy White Paper.

And while the UK has the best wind and marine renewable resource in Europe it generates a smaller proportion of its energy needs from renewable energy than almost any other country in Europe. I think we beat Malta and come in just behind Luxembourg.

The way our energy system is constructed gives people little or no control over what is one of the most important issues that we have to face. Energy has got to become a part of everyone's daily life. Because how we use - or at the moment abuse energy - is going to have an impact on everyone's daily life. It's why decentralised energy is such an important component of changing the way we use and produce energy.

But we are starting at a very low base. When you look at Germany compared to the UK you find that the town of Frieberg - just 200,000



people - has more solar PV power than the whole of Britain. And by the time we have our first ecotown Germany will have 50.

And while we might have 25,000 jobs in the renewable energy sector in total, Germany adds that amount every year - with a quarter of a million people already employed in their renewable energy sector today.

Germany's success was partly kick started by a simple regulatory mechanism, called a feed in tariff, that has been adopted globally, except, yes you've guessed it, in the UK. We have the most expensive, inefficient and bureaucratic system imaginable.

Here in the UK we have much to learn about how to develop low carbon energy. The proposals you are about to hear in detail represent ideas drawn from some of the best practice developed in the world today. These are simple, but profound solutions to our climate and energy crisis.

Instead of making everyone part of the problem, decentralised energy empowers everyone to be part of the solution.

And that is why we welcomed this report today - as a major breakthrough in mainstream energy policy thinking and a first surge towards that bigger and urgently needed vision of a completely clean and renewable energy system.

We expect this policy to be resisted by all the usual suspects. But the Conservative party must hold firm.

And I want to use this opportunity to assure not just the Conservatives, but all our political parties that there is a huge groundswell of public support - from families, communities and businesses - who believe that renewable and decentralised energy are the real solutions to climate change. And not only do they believe it - they want to be a part of it.

(David Cameron's speech can be read at

[http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj\\_id=141055](http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=141055))